

GREEN ECONOMY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S CAPE FLORISTIC REGION

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BACKGROUND

- There is a global movement to balance **ecological conservation** and **poverty alleviation**
- One pathway to meet these goals is a **transition to a green economy**
- My research explores how the **green economy** plays out in the context of **rural South Africa**



BACKGROUND

- Early research stage
- Preliminary findings are mostly **contextual information**
- Fieldwork in South Africa begins in January

SOUTH AFRICA

- Second largest economy in Africa
- Heavy reliance on **mineral and resource extraction**
- Economy is financialized
- Very high CO₂ emissions per capita



SOUTH AFRICA

- Excludes the **poor black majority**
- One of the most **unequal societies** in the world (Gini coefficient 62.5)
- **Half** the population lives in **poverty**
- Official unemployment 26%





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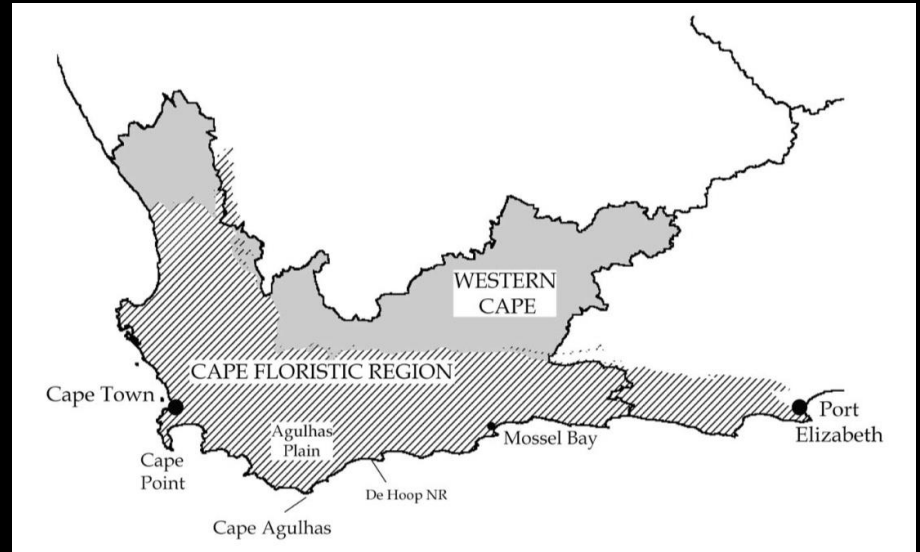
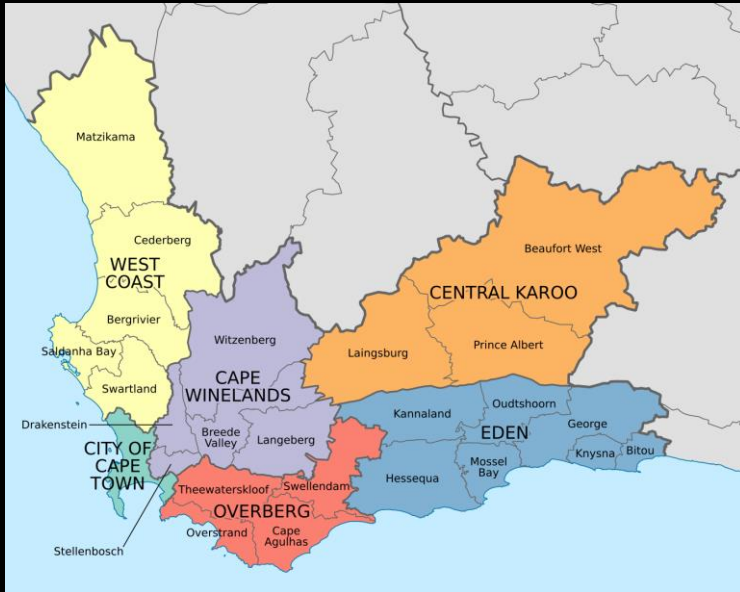
STUDY AREA

- Cape Agulhas municipality
- Population: ~35,000
- ~11% of households live in poverty
- Overstrand municipality
- Population: ~80,000
- ~20% of households live in poverty
- ~19% unemployment

Source: (Western Cape Government 2015; 2017)

CAPE FLORISTIC REGION

- One of six Floral Kingdoms in the world



CAPE FLORISTIC REGION

- Renown for ecological biodiversity
- Represents less than 0.5% of Africa's total area, but is home to **20% of the continent's flora**
- Local people rely on the biodiversity for ecosystem services and livelihoods
- Infested with **invasive alien plants**
- Prone to **drought and fires**



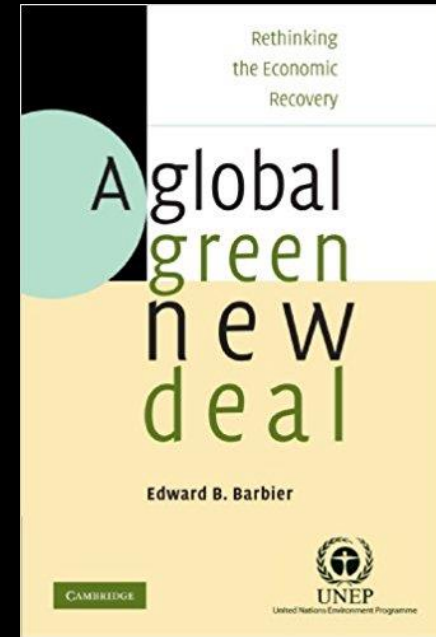
WHAT IS A GREEN ECONOMY?

Concepts, interpretations and theories behind **transitioning from a business-as-usual economy** to one that is guided by a new set of goals that **ultimately reduces greenhouse gas emissions**

UN GLOBAL GREEN NEW DEAL

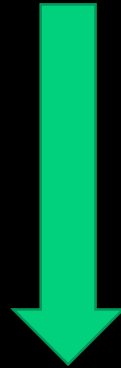
Policy actions that would help the global economy **recover** and improve its **long-term sustainability**

- Economic recovery
- Poverty eradication
- Reduce carbon emissions and environmental degradation



Four green economy discourses

- Green resilience
- Green growth
- Green transformation
- Green revolution



- Conforms to neoliberalism
- Business as usual
- 'Sustainable development'
- Greenwashing

'Weak'

- Rejects neoliberalism
- Radical economic transformation

'Strong'



GAP IN RESEARCH

There is little research on how **the green economy is practiced** on the ground in South Africa

Understand how the **green economy plays out** on the ground in South Africa's Cape Floristic Region



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the current policy and development context in which **government, international agencies, and local NGOs** engage with the green economy in the Cape Floristic Region?
- What are the **economic, social and institutional barriers** that prevent these institutions from achieving their green economy goals?
- How have **recent crises** (e.g. 2008 financial crash, drought) **influenced green economy thinking** in the CFR?

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

What do institutions WANT to do in terms of the green economy?

Three main institutions engage with the green economy:

- **Government**
- International actors (e.g. UN, GIZ)
- Local institutions and NGOs



The government wants a **socially inclusive transition** to a green,
low-carbon economy

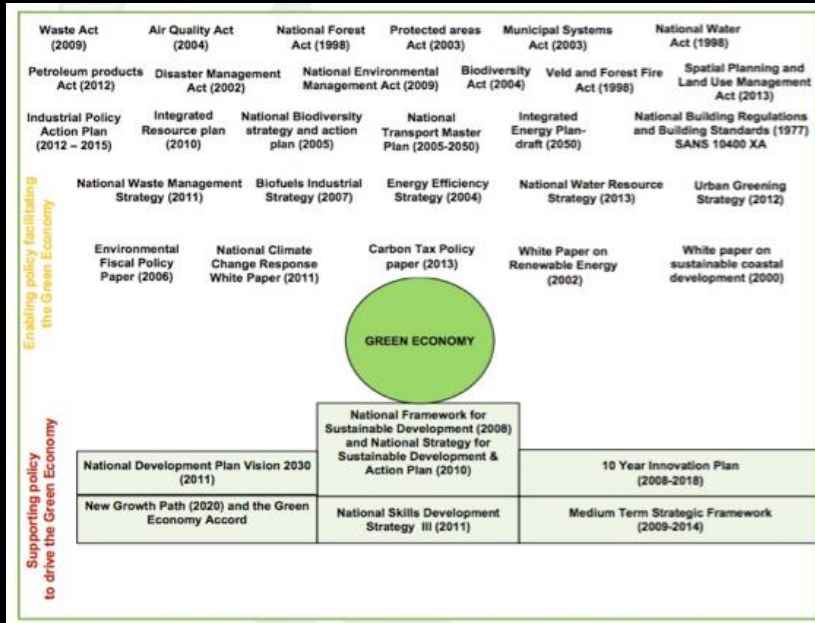
Evidenced by national and international policies and frameworks:
SDGs, Paris Climate Accord, Green Economy Accord, National
Development Plan



What is the government ACTUALLY DOING to achieve this goal?

The government has a **strong policy framework, investment plan, and series of programs** for the green economy

GREEN ECONOMY POLICY FRAMEWORK



32 national and provincial green economy policies and strategies

International agreements (e.g. SDGs, Paris Climate Agreement)

GREEN FUND

- R800 million fund (\$59 million USD)
- Fund **green investments** like renewable energy and resource management
- Fund **green economy research** to inform policy





EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM (EPWP)

- Massive **public works program** that has created millions of work opportunities for poor people
- R127 billion (\$10 billion USD) per year funding over 11,000 projects
- Win-win strategy for **restoring ecological infrastructure** while simultaneously **alleviating poverty**



ENVIRONMENT SECTOR

Working for Water Program

- Removes invasive plant species
- Preserves water resources

Working on Fire Program

- Fire prevention, awareness, and education





Are these green economy initiatives effective?

Contextual evidence: **not really**

Barriers:

- Weak state
- Contested nature of the links between the state and market
- Dominance of market-based thinking

RESEARCH PLAN

- **Interview key informants:** EPWP officials, local government officials, leaders of local institutions and NGOs, officials at international green economy programs (PAGE, SWITCH Africa Green)
- **Hold focus groups**
- Explore how the government, local NGOs and international agencies **engage with the green economy** in the CFR

EXPECTED FINDINGS

- Most institutions emphasize **job creation**, may or may not be green jobs
- **Multiple green economy discourses** are played out simultaneously by the government, international actors, and local organizations
- The green economy is largely practiced under a **neoliberal paradigm** with **economic growth** being the primary indicator of success

SIGNIFICANCE

- South Africa is a potential **green economy leader** for the rest of Africa
- Provide context for South Africa's **green economy transition**
- Inform green economy decision-making and policies





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QUESTIONS?